

California Medical Assistance Program will, due to their magnitude, profoundly influence prepayment and health insurance concepts. The programs must prove successful in vital areas if this influence is to be in the best interest of the public and the profession.

At this time, while the government is rapidly expanding its role in the provision of medical services, it behooves us to strengthen our own Blue Shield commercial-type programs. Although the Blue Shield concept owes its existence to the medical profession in California, our own Blue Shield Plan in this state covers only a small percentage of the market in comparison with most other Blue Shield plans. At present CPS membership stands at 1,145,000 persons or about 6 per cent of the California population. Even so, through its pilot studies and program development CPS has had a significant influence on Blue Shield nationally and on the health coverage field in general.

Many have voiced the opinion that CPS should cover a much larger segment of the population, so that its influence might be greater. Others have taken the opposite view. CPS was created by physicians as a mechanism to perform social and civic service of great public benefit—to remove the financial barrier between the public and the availability of good medical care. To achieve this prepayment goal, CPS always must balance the demands of the marketplace against the demands of medical practice and the desires of the medical

community. Often it seems that the type of prepayment coverage best suited to the requirements of medical practice is not readily understood or acceptable to the purchaser of health programs. Exerting influence on accepted standards of the local market is obviously more difficult for an organization having only a minor share of the market. Only by increasing our subscriber membership can we hope to substantially influence the California general public's concept of medically sound prepayment health coverage.

The need for exerting influence on the commercial market is increased rather than diminished by the new government programs if the medical profession wishes to retain its traditional leadership in the design of health care programs, and if we hope to establish clearly in the public's mind the advantages of voluntary medically-oriented coverage.

CPS has been called upon many times during the past quarter century to undertake tasks vital to the private practice of medicine. The role is not an unfamiliar one since CPS from its very beginning has served medicine while serving the public. With the assistance and support of physicians and their societies, the Board of Trustees of CPS-Blue Shield can be confident that it will successfully meet the challenges which face us today.

WILLIAM H. THOMPSON, M.D.
Past Chairman, Board of Trustees
California Physicians' Service—Blue Shield

To All My Patients

"I did not write the medicare bill.

"I am not sure I understand it.

"I am not a government official.

"I was not trained in political economy.

"If you are not satisfied with your present, (1) medical costs or services, (2) hospital availabilities or cost, or (3) the cost of your drugs, there isn't much reason to talk it over with me—I am probably as dissatisfied as you are and probably much more confused.

"There isn't much point in discussing with me the problems you have as a result of getting a whole new system of laws (regarding your medical care) to live by, because I don't yet understand what it is all about either.

"May I humbly suggest, if you have a problem (and I sincerely hope you do not) that you write

your representative or senator in the United States Congress. Most of them knew enough about the law to vote for it, and perhaps since they knew so much about it when it was voted on, they can give you answers to all your questions now. I can't.

"Since my profession . . . is coming more and more under the control of the elected and appointed public officials in Washington, D.C., please do not expect me to become less and less a doctor. I can't. I won't. Therefore, the economic-legal-political questions that are troubling you should be taken to the experts in those fields for an appropriate answer.

"In the meantime, remember me as the one who treats your arthritis, your blood pressure, your aches and pains. The one who is concerned with your long and comfortable physical life and—I hope—your mental stability in these trying hours."

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